

Completing Steps IV-VI of the State of Vermont Workforce Planning Model

Step IV: Analyze Workforce Gaps

Introduction

Step IV of the Seven Step Workforce Planning Model is: Analyze Workforce Gaps. The information compiled up to this point will be the source material for analyzing the gaps and generating gap-closing strategies. That information includes:

1. A review of the organization's **mission/vision and goals** (the strategic plan).
2. Establishment of the **time period** to be address by the plan.
3. The **workforce data**, which have been collected and organized for easy access and analysis. (See "[Workforce Planning Data Collection Worksheets](#)" in the Data Collection and Analysis section of this Toolkit.)
4. The **environmental scan and workforce SWOT analysis**, which reflect the organization's internal and external workforce environments; and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. (See the tools available for environmental scans in the [Data Collection and Analysis](#) section of this Toolkit.)
5. The "[Work Functions Work Page](#)" and the "[Projecting Workforce Supply](#)" **work pages** (Future Staffing Demand and Future Staffing Supply), which give the team an analysis of the data in light of the organization's environmental factors.
6. The **Competencies/KSAs** for each position and/or job category, which have been identified, affirmed or validated by those who perform the work, and assigned proficiency levels. (See the [Competencies](#) section of this Toolkit.)

What is a Workforce Gap?

Following is a working definition:

A workforce gap arises wherever the proficiency level for a competency is not being met by any member or segment of the organization.

A useful alternative definition is:

A workforce gap is the difference between the level of proficiency identified for each competency, and the level of proficiency currently demonstrated by each member or segment of the workforce.

What is Involved in a Workforce Gap Analysis?

The Workforce Planning Team now has two types of information about the organization.

The first is the “conceptual” information generated in the Environmental Scan and the SWOT analysis. This gives the team insight into:

1. The external pressures and opportunities in relation to the available workforce; and
2. Internal resources, limitations, culture, policies, and practices in relation to the workforce.

These will allow the team realistically to gauge what strategies are achievable for the years ahead.

The second type of information is detailed in nature, and has two components:

1. The demographics and numbers of current staff, the trends in turnover, etc., and the assessment of the future staffing supply and demand.
2. The competencies needed and possessed among the staff members of the future in order to fulfill the mission/vision and the strategic plan of the organization, and the proficiency levels required.

With this information, the team’s next steps are to:

1. Complete the “[Gap Analysis Work Pages](#)”. The first workpage, “Gap Analysis”, will help to identify the gaps that exist between the projected supply and projected demand. The second instrument, the “Gap Priorities” work page, will help to establish which of the gaps are most important to meet in order to address the organization’s mission/vision.
2. If the team has not yet done so, now is the time to complete the “[Competency Gap Assessment Form](#)”. Keep in mind that the competency needs of the organization do not forever need to be met the way they have always been met in the past.
3. Review all the information and identify any final workforce gaps that will exist in the period the workforce plan will address. (In most cases, plans will address the next three to five years.)

Step V: Develop Gap-Closing Strategies to Meet Your Workforce Needs

The team has now assessed the gaps between the competencies needed to accomplish the organization’s mission/vision, and the competencies available in the current workforce. It is time to develop strategies to address these gaps.

A Gap-Closing Strategy Session

Most important to developing gap-closing strategies is the collaborative process. This is not a time for the team to operate in isolation. In fact, by this time, it is likely that the team is overly-familiar with the information. **Invite stakeholders into the process at this point!**

1. Design a strategy planning session (half or full-day, with possible carryover to a follow-up session or sessions). (Contact The Summit at workforceplanning@state.vt.us for assistance.)
2. Identify key stakeholders, including leaders, managers, and line staff. You may also consider representatives from external stakeholders if appropriate.
3. Invite a group of five to 15 representative stakeholders.
4. Ensure a skilled facilitator will manage the meeting.
5. Conduct the Strategy Session.

Desired Outcomes of the Session:

- A brainstormed list of possible strategies to address each workforce gap.
- The brainstormed strategies prioritized according to their importance in ensuring the implementation of the organization's vision/mission and goals for the period of the workforce plan.
- Selection of specific/key strategies for implementation.
- Action plans for each of the selected strategies.
- Celebration of your outstanding accomplishment!

Strategies

Many, if not most, gaps in the workforce can be addressed by more than one means. Fortunately, a variety of strategies are available, and they can be combined to maximize the potential for success. Which strategy or strategies your organization chooses will depend on conditions in the environment (economy, workforce availability, resources, leadership, etc.).

This website provides tools related to several of the many possible strategies. Following are links to three strategies that rely on *internal* resources. Do not be limited by this list! The strategy session described above can begin with this list of ideas, but should be stimulated to come up with new ideas as well.

- [Succession Planning](#), which can be used to assess the talent currently available within the organization, and to develop strategies to prepare individuals for key leadership in the future.

- [Knowledge Transfer](#), which can help the organization prepare for the departure of key positions. e.g.: providing documentation and cross-training for processes and information that might otherwise be lodged in a single individual.
- [Training and Professional Development](#), which supports succession planning by providing development plans for each employee.

Other key strategies for meeting the organization's workforce needs where gaps exist are supported by web pages elsewhere in the DHR website. Find these resources at <http://humanresources.vermont.gov/services>. Refer also to the document, "DHR Website WP Resources" on the [Getting Started](#) page of this toolkit.

These resources include:

- **Performance Management**, which can be a gap-closing strategy when analysis indicates that:
 - The competencies exist among staff, but are not being exhibited in performance.
 - Staff are not developing new or improved skills in such a way that would prepare them for advancement within the organization.
 - Staff appear to be working hard, but the mission/vision and goals of the organization are not being achieved.

A unified and comprehensive approach to performance management within an organization supports retention and high performance. It incorporates the use of development plans, a year-round approach to performance assessment, and much more. See "[A Guide to the State Performance Management System](#)" for details.

- **Position classification and position management**, which may help the team and managers to ensure the positions accurately portray the competencies needed to close the workforce gaps.
- **Recruitment strategies** may be key to resolving some staffing needs.
 - Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity strategies may help to reach candidates not historically tapped by the organization.
 - A fresh approach to advertising may also reach untapped candidates.
 - Establishing formal or informal relationships with academic and vocational programs in related fields may advance recruitment efforts. Consider internships as a means of identifying applicants with needed competencies:
http://humanresources.vermont.gov/career_center/internship_opportunities

Step VI: Implement the Workforce Plan

On the Getting Started page of this toolkit is a link to the "[Workforce Planning Report Outline](#)". This is where the Workforce Planning Team will finally lodge the plan that has been developed.

1. Complete the report.

2. Vet the report for a final review and approval with leadership.
3. Inform the organization of the key points from the plan.
4. Involve the entire organization in the process of implementation
5. Refer to the resources on the [Evaluation](#) page of the Workforce Planning Toolkit, and continuously assess the implementation process.
6. Celebrate each accomplishment, and learn from each setback.

Step VII: Evaluate and Revise the Plan

Evaluation and revision of the workforce plan will occur simultaneously, not consecutively, with Step VI: Implement the Workforce Plan. Follow the guidelines in the step itself, and the recommendations on the Evaluation page of this toolkit. The Evaluation step calls for the organization to:

1. Review the workforce plan objectives, performance measures, and timeline.
2. Assess what is working and what is not, both in the plan and in the planning process (this is an ongoing process).
3. Make adjustments as needed.
4. Address new workforce and organizational issues as they arise.

If it sounds like a continuous loop, it is. This process will help the organization to keep its eye on the horizon and its hand on the wheel at the same time.